Growth and Attitude of Printmaking in Kala Bhavana, Santiniketan (1920-2010): An approach to historical , technical and analytical study.

SYNOPSIS

A synopsis submitted to Visva Bharati

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GROWTH ANDATTITUDE OF PRINTMAKING IN KALA BHAVANA , SANTINIKETAN (1920-2010) : AN APPROACH TO HISTORICAL ,TECHNICAL AND ANALYTICAL STUDY(1920-2010)

INTRODUCTION

In 15 th century Printmaking was usually used for religious purpose ,such as spreading the Bible.The practice started from Germany and then moved to the rest of the world .In Europe most of the practicing artist, of the time , considered printmaking a serious medium . Artist like Albrecht Durer , Leonardo da Vinchi has worked in engraving . Later in the 17 th Century Rembrandt ,W. Daumier , Francisco de Goya worked in etching .

The Printmaking arrived in India Goa by Portuguese Printmaking Pressin 1566. Printmaking got its root when Raja Ravi Verma was deeply inspired by it and started Oleography . These Prints on mythological subjects made Print popular in India and the journey initiated in preliminary stage. Raja Ravi Varma was the first artist in India who used printmaking, not as an artistic medium in itself, but as a means for his art to reach the masses. To achieve his purpose, he set up his own lithographic press towards the end of the 19th century, known as the Ravi Varma press in Ghatkopar, Bombay. Here he copied several of his religious and secular paintings and printed them as glossy oleographs.

In addition to it further Printmaking started in British colonial Art colleges . Slowly the Printmaking spread over to Madras , Kolkata, Mumbai, Lahore , Delhi &Simla.

INITIAL STAGE OF PRINTMAKING IN BENGAL

At the Vichitra club in Kolkata Abanindranath Tagore , Nandalal Bose and Mukul Dey accept this new medium as work of Art. Here new style of painting and Printmaking were explored. The Tagore brothers, Abanindranath, Gagendranath transformed the veranda of their Jorasanko residence into a meeting ground for the club and frequently hosted art salons there. Among the brothers who spearheaded the Bichitra Club, artist Gagendranath Tagore took a special interest in lithography, and set up his own lithographic press in 1917. He later published an album of his prints.

Another prominent member of the Bichitra Club was artist Mukul Chandra Dey, who went to America in 1916 to learn the technique of etching from James Blinding Slone. He traveled again, in 1920, to England where he studied etching and engraving under Murohead Bone before returning in 1926. Dey was the first Indian artist who went abroad to learn graphic art. Nandalal Bose was another artist closely associated with the Bichitra Club.

As a creative medium in India it started during the second decade of the twentieth century .Rabindranath Tagore established Kala Bhavana in Santiniketan in 1919 which culminated the new era in Indian Art .The newly established Art college , the creative ambience , - Kala Bhavana received a new boost to the history of Indian Art under the leadership of Nandalal Bose. The practice of printmaking as a fine art medium gained immense popularity in Kala Bhavana.

DEVELOPMENT OF PRINTS

Right from the beginning Graphic Art which is Presently called Printmaking was introduced in the teaching program of Kala Bhavana. French artist Madame Andre Korpeles visited Santiniketan between 1921-1922. Being an expert in wood engraving Madame Andre demonstrated the process in kala Bhavana which made the practicing Artist of Kala Bhavana familiar with the new technique for the first time. . In 1925 , Ramendra Nath Chakrovorty started practicing and experimenting colour wood cut. During the same year Surendranath l<ar, an artist-craftsman, technician and architect, went to London to learn the technique of lithography and etching . The Printmaking took a momentum ,when Gagendranath Tagore started doing Lithography print for his cartoon work, he purchased a litho Press and established it at his resident and a pressman was appointed to look after it. In 1926 Gagendra Nath Tagore donated his Litho Press to Kala Bavana. In spite of this lithography did not make much progress as there was no experienced artist or technician to look after the lithography section in kala bhavana. However, with time, more and more artists grew familiar with printmaking as an art form and pursued it frequently. Ramendranath Chakravorty, Binode Behari Mukherjee, Ramkinker Baij, Manindra Bhusan Gupta and Biswarup Bose are some of the Indian artists who generated and sustained the great interest in printmaking during the 1930s and 40s. They experimented freely with its various techniques and created several intaglio and relief prints. This was the turning point for printmaking in India, as artists no longer associated the techniques with their reproductive value, but instead, concentrated on using them to make fine art.

In the beginning Ramendra Nath learned the preliminary techniques of lithography and Etching from Srendranath . The preliminary development of Lithography in kala Bhavana created deep interest and as a result Nandalal Bose planed a programme to publish a folio in color Lithography . Due to technological gaps , the lithography could not developed further .Instate the black and white linocuts known as linoleum block which was technically less complicated and easier to handle and it gives an attractive monochromatic image influenced Nandalal Bose to work and at the school and it was introduced to the syllabus or some of the schools. Manindra Bhusan Gupta was also interested in printmaking like Ramendranath .. He had his primary lesion on slate engraving. Encouraged by the development Biswarup Bose , another printmaker visited Japan during 1935 to learn Japanese multi- color woodcut technique. After his return Kala Bhavana got a new dimension. Biswarup Bose made many reproduction of indigenous images in Japanese woodcut technique and this new medium was quite inspiring to the artists of Santiniketan.

Ramendranath, Manindra Bhusan and Biswarup Bose were the great experimentalists, and their research attitude towards printmaking created an atmosphere of creative experimentation. However there is a conflict between graphic media and the content and form they used, as their aim was to build up a picturesque effect on the graphic surface and as a result most of their prints were more painterly than Graphic.

Later during this decade a different aim could be seen in the works of Benodbehari Mukherjee and Ramkinkar Baij . The creative bend of Benodbehari and Ramkinkar inspired to experiment with various graphic media such as woodcut , wood engraving , linocut ,etching ,drypoint , lithography . Benodbehari and Ramkinkar the two disciple and outstanding pupil selected the linoleum block

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to illustrate Rabindranath's book called Sahaj Path for children was printed in thirties. The remarkable linocut illustrations in the book expressed their strong graphic character. The series of that book probably to be considered as a turning point in the history of Indian contemporary print. The basic simple design , distinct space with balanced distribution of black and white , were the attraction of linocuts .

Basically the relief process was common practice among students in general , but the lithography and intaglio was taken care for the advance student . At that time few talented students, Dinkar Koushik , Nara Venkat Ratnama, Kripal Singh, Sankho Choudhury, Madhukar Sheth, , K G Subramanyan, Jagdesh Mittal, Gostto Behari ,Banabehari Ghosh, and Binodh Rahut Roy were able to create something original, especially in woodcut and linocut.

BOOST AFTER 1960 s

The five year Degree and Diploma courses were .started in 1967 at Kala Bhavana under the guidance of Dinkar Kowshik and more reformation was done. With the new syllabus of five year Degree course (3+2) and diploma course(3+2), the entire course of study was divided and organized into four departments: (1) Painting (2) Graphic Art, (3) Sculpture, . (4) History of Art and Aesthetics. Along with these four departments, the two years certificate course in crafts and design also continued. It was common that every student had to join first the elementary course, and he had to work for three years to is qualify himself/ herself to select any of the four specialized streams. These four departments had a course and curriculum of two years at the specialization stage. For the first time in India printmaking was introduced as a specialization in Graduation level. And a separate graphic section, with three sub-sections, (a) Relief process; woodcut

Planography: lithograph and 'Platography (commencing later, in2005) (c) Intaglio; etching, engraving, 'drypoints, etc. 1968, during the summer Kala Bhavana arranged a graphic camp and SomnathHoreK G Subramanyan, A Ramachandran,Binodbehari, Ramkinkar andSukhomoyMitra were the participants at that camp. Specialinterest was taken in lithography andetching in this camp.

EXPLORATION AND EXTENSION OF PRINTMAKING SECTION

SomnathHore is another artist who contributed greatly to the development of printmaking in Santiniketan and as well as in India. During his time as a student at the Government College of Art in Calcutta, Hore printed just a few wood engravings. After his graduation, however, the artist continued to research and experiment with various processes in the field of practical printmaking, mastering many of them including relief, multi-coloured intaglio and lithography. His journey in Printmaking continued when he later moved to Santiniketan.

SomnathHore joined as thehead of the department of graphic artsin the year 1969. A charged and renewedenthusiasm was created in theprintmaking section under the expertguidance of SomnathHore andBiswarup Bose. As a practicing contemporary Printmaker SomnathHore was an resource to the Printmaking section of kalabhavana. His long journey of Printmaking and continues effort of experimenting various medium of Printmaking was an great support to Printmaking development of Santiniketan . His experience of his early Prints in Viscosity process of making colour Etching the metal matrix with acid bitten or tooled to different depths , colours of different viscosity laid on to them using rollers of various softness , and the image is transferred to paper with single printing has helped the students and scholars to know and understand the process and its impact in development of Printmaking in the contemporary context. The

and its impact in development of Printmaking in the contemporary context. The white on white series works which he started in 1971 was a great formation of printing concept.

The first batch of students joined the specialized Printmaking department in the year 1970. Somnath Hore actively started introducing various techniques, especially in lithography and etching. This was a period we can consider as research and experimentation with different graphic media. Students were widely allowed and guided by Somnath Hore and Biswarup Bose, the two great experimentalists, to explore graphic media with the attitude of research in the field of Printmaking. The response popularity of the department increased to a great extent. The appreciation of Printmaking, its standard and more development in Printmaking section started gradually .

It was the year 1973 a silkscreen class for senior students was started under the supervision of Biswarup Bose. Along with this Tapan Mitra & Santanu Bhattacherjee sincerely devoted their full time to establish a strong serigraphy section in Kala Bhavana. In the initial stage the section could not move much forward. However the practice of serigraphy restarted again in 1990 is being continuing till date. Other prominent printmakers of period immediately following Indian independence include Sanat Kar, Lalu Prasad Shaw. Sanat Kar a pillar of Printmaking establishment of Kala Bhavana. A devoted and serious Printmaker who has contributed many thing to Printmaking fraternity .Apart his role as a teacher and resident of Santiniketan , he was a complete Artist with innovative bend. His energy for experiments of the new techniques of Printmaking was endless. With limited availability he has produced high qualities of Prints. His works in wood intaglio are example of these experiments . The texture created by

ANALYSIS OF THE PRINTMAKING DURING 1920 TO 2010

In my final analysis , I must take the reader back to the opening pages of this synopsis where as it may be remembered , I have highlighted the history of preliminary introduction of Printmaking in India .While elaborating the whole journey of Printmaking towards the contemporary and its transformation from its commercial approach to complete creative Art practice I would like to discuss the role of Artists and Institutions who contributed for the overall development.

As I have already mentioned that Kala Bhavana , Santiniketan was perhaps the only centre were Printmaking got its complete freedom to develop from the time of Artist Ramendra nath Chakroborty , Binode Bihari Mukherjee , Ramkinkar Baij and many others.

I feel that the journey of Printmakingin in Santiniketan towards the contemporary world was largely initiated Somnath Hore.

At a time when in India , Printmaking was not considered a medium worthy of the fine artist, Somnath Hore developed and worked in the medium making prints that have brought him recognition the world over as one of the finest Printmaker of this century and also placed Printmaking as one of the strong medium in the Indian creative art . The journey of creative prints, which were spearheaded by Nandalal and other artist in Santiniketan boosted up by Somnath Hore's strong attachment and research in the practical field and placed Santiniketan as one of the important and major center for Printmaking.

CONCLUSION

Graphic Art presents boundless opportunity for the artist expression .Almost after 70's Indian Artist very much attracted by this media and the patronage of the Universities to research and creativity have bought Printmaking activity to unprecedented levels of aesthetic potentiality , technical proficiency , sophistication and popularity.

Barriers are being broken down in the Indian Art since today. The Printmakers has come to be seen as an artist like any other working in a particular creative field , and to encourage this ideas.

More creative Printmaking has emerged in the last 30 year than in all the preceding years of the past . As artist explored the possibilities at their disposal for making original prints , their work took on the look and feel of one or more of the movements that have surfaced in the contemporary period . The same trends and developments that have take place in the other field have had partial development in Printmaking too. Today it is considered to be one of the most creative medium in the field of world contemporary Art.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Methodology of Doctoral Thesis, time break up, documentation modes andresources and style sheet:

***A.** Tentative span/duration required for the Research/Doctoral Thesis: -*

Three years.

***B.** Target Break-ups*

1. Documentation - Two year

2. Compilation - Six months.

3. Final stage preparation for presenting the Thesis - Six months.

***C.** (a) Major area of resource for documentation:*

For my thesis major collection are in Santiniketan , Kala Bhavana museum , KB Library and also in Private collection in Santiniketan . There are other source of relevant documents on the research topics are in Kolkata , Hyderabad (Jagdesh Mittal ' s collection) , National Gallery of Modern Art, New Delhi etc.

(b) Resource for documentation:

I. Private and Public Museum, Institutions, Archives, Regional and states crafts guilds, Academy, Library and individual collections in India and abroad.

D. *Mode of documentation:*

I. Interview

2. Colour photographs/Digital images.

` Caption for illustrations will be as follows: _

- The name of the Artist (if available),

- Title of the works, Provenance,

- School/Institutions,

- Date or Period,

- Material size (in metric measurements),

-Names ofthe collection (museum, institution) or individual).

a. Acc. no. (if any) or other related information

b. Physical condition

E. *Text:*

I. Final paper and quarterly reports will be provided in printed copy along necessary documents.

2. Non English words other than proper names will be in italics.

3. Use of diacritical marks on all Indian words except proper names.

4. Information about the contributors will be as follows:

Name ,Qualification, Occupation or current assignment, important published works/project/other relevant information.

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